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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR VISITS VALDIVIA, SPEAKS AT CONSERVATION FINANCE CONFERENCE

¶1. Summary: The Ambassador recently visited Valdivia -- a forestry and scientific research hub in southern Chile -- to deliver remarks at the closing session of a Harvard-affiliated conference, "Conservation Capital in the Americas," at the Universidad Austral. In his first visit to the recently-designated XIV region, the Ambassador met with the Intendente, Mayor, a provincial development agency, and toured a world-class Millennium Science Institution. At the U.S.-Embassy supported American Corner in Valdivia -- one of the most dynamic in Chile

-- the Ambassador spoke with Chilean students learning English in a TOEFL program organized by the Corner's Coordinator. The Ambassador's trip, which received favorable print and TV coverage, helped advance our scientific and environmental agenda as well as improve outreach to a less traveled area of Chile. End Summary.

¶2. In his first visit to the Valdivia region, the Ambassador addressed a Universidad Austral-hosted conference, "Conservation Capital in the Americas," on January 17-19. The three-day conference brought together conservation practitioners, educators, and students from developed and developing countries across North, Central, and South America to discuss effective practices and emerging innovations for financing conservation. The conference organizers, among them the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies at Harvard University and Harvard's Program on Conservation Innovation, are compiling the conference materials and proceedings into a book. Organizers have asked the Ambassador to contribute to the book's forward.

¶3. On the final night of the conference, the Ambassador addressed approximately 120 conference attendees and members of the public, focusing on the progress the United States has made over the last 40 years on environmental protection and conservation and the new administration's commitment to these priorities. The audience clapped and cheered as he expressed his own excitement over the highly anticipated "Green Administration" ushered in by the new U.S. President.

¶4. The Ambassador also met with Alcalde Bernardo Berger of Valdivia and Intendente Ivan Flores of Region XIV (Los Rios), attended a dinner with Rector Victor Cubillos Godoy of Unviersidad Austral, met with scientific researchers from the Millennium Science Institution's "Centro de Estudios Cientificos" (which he also toured), and met with the President and Director of CODEPROVAL -- a non-profit development agency in Valdivia and contractor for CORFO, the Chilean Economic Development Agency. The Ambassador discussed mostly local concerns and issues and explored opportunities for further Embassy cooperation.

¶5. In a visit to the Embassy-supported American Corner (AC) located in the Universidad Austral, the Ambassador had the occasion to speak with several students. Of all of the ACs in Chile, the AC in Valdivia is one of the most dynamic, creatively utilizing scarce resources. Valdivia AC Coordinator Ivet Parra has done an excellent job conducting a wide range of programs at the University. For

example, she personally organized and secured funds for a series of TOEFL courses at the AC. One of these courses began on the day of the Ambassador's visit and he was able to meet with the 25 new students and their instructor.

¶6. The Ambassador's visit to Valdivia received very favorable media coverage, advancing the mission's goal of expanding public outreach to more remote locations within Chile. He conducted several interviews with the local press, including El Diario Austral (the region's daily newspaper) and local TV (a CNN affiliate).

¶7. Comment: With its world-class research institute, Valdivia is becoming an increasingly important center for environmental, glacier, and forestry research. The Ambassador's visit helped bolster Embassy efforts to expand scientific and research cooperation in Valdivia and support the American Corner, which has done an outstanding job promoting U.S.-related activities since its establishment nearly three years ago. Later this month, the U.S. Forestry Service will visit Valdivia and the Austral University for a series of meetings and field excursions related to Long-Term Ecological Research, including visits to nearby volcanic activity sites, such as Chaiten, and sharing U.S. experiences related to Mount St. Helens in Washington State.

SIMONS